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A new beginning
Teresa Mae Floyd Foulds was the first baby born in Haliburton County this year, arriving on the afternoon of Jan. 1 at home in Harcourt and joining her three older siblings. For the full story, see inside this edition. /submitted

Busy holiday season for downtown businesses

ADAM FRISK
Journalist

The 2025 holiday shopping season was a banner year, thanks to the early arrival of winter weather, community loyalty, and a surge in tourism, according to local businesses.

For stores like Algonquin Outfitters and Delancey Sports, the weeks leading up to the New Year were defined by high traffic and a shared sense of community support.

"This holiday season was really good. It picked up early on in December with our sales. We started our Black Friday sales in late November, and they continued into the December holiday season," Scott Swaga of Algonquin Outfitters said in a recent interview. "Lots of people were stocking up on clothing, winter goods, and hard goods like snowboards and skis. The early winter season has really helped us out. People are already out on the trails and enjoying what the winter season is bringing us."

Over at Delancey Sports, the season was marked by a noticeable increase in both foot traffic and total sales compared to last year.

"Year over year, it's definitely up," Erika Mozes said. "It was really nice to see the community come out and support our business in particular, like the Roots product. Just giving the gift of Roots and Haliburton to others definitely helped with our sales this December as well."

The holiday shopping rush was further bolstered by excitement surrounding the store's future, the co-owner said.

"Everybody who was coming in was also coming in to check out the store and say congrats on the new building," Mozes explained.

While many retailers rely on Boxing Day sales to further drive profits, the folks at Delancey Sports stuck to their values and deliberately avoided deep, post-Christmas discounts out of respect for their pre-holiday customers.

"So we actually purposely don't do a big Boxing Day sale. We just don't think that it's right that people support us right before the holidays and then we discount our products right afterwards," Mozes said. "But you know we still had great traffic in Haliburton throughout that week."

Buying local was a recurring theme for the holiday season.

"I'm always nervous that Amazon's my biggest competitor, but people were actively telling me they were coming here instead of shopping online," Kelsey Redman, owner of Redmans Records, said.

While Redman noted that this was her first holiday season as owner of the record shop, she explained that Christmas Eve was "insanely busy," with the majority of customers being "panicking dads and husbands" looking for a last-minute gift.

Locals seemed to have been the main support for early holiday sales, but the weekend between Christmas and New Year's saw an influx of tourism that helped push further sales in Haliburton.

"I had a few road trippers - there was a lot of tourism I found still between Christmas and New Year's," Redman said while recounting a particularly

see BUSINESSES page 13

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First county baby arrives on New Year's Day

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

January 1 is a date that brings fresh starts, new beginnings, and the start of a brand new chapter.

For one Harcourt family, January 1 will symbolize something a little extra special.

On New Year's Day, Noella Floyd-Foulds and her husband, Harley, welcomed their fourth child, Teresa Mae Floyd Foulds, born at their home with the help of the Haliburton-Bancroft Midwives.

Teresa was the first midwives-recorded baby in Haliburton County for 2026.

"My last pregnancy was three weeks early," said Noella, "so I was definitely planning for a 2026 baby." With a due date of Jan. 10, Noella and Harley knew that they may be having a Christmas baby, "but that's not what I wanted," Noella laughed. "I wanted to make it to the new year."

She began having contractions on New Year's Eve, but noted that she didn't believe she was quite ready yet. By the next day, the contractions were coming on stronger, but Noella had a scheduled appointment with the midwives that afternoon. The first midwife arrived at their home at 3:30 p.m. for their appointment, but by 4:41, Teresa had arrived. "It happened pretty quickly," chuckled Noella, "but everything went really well."

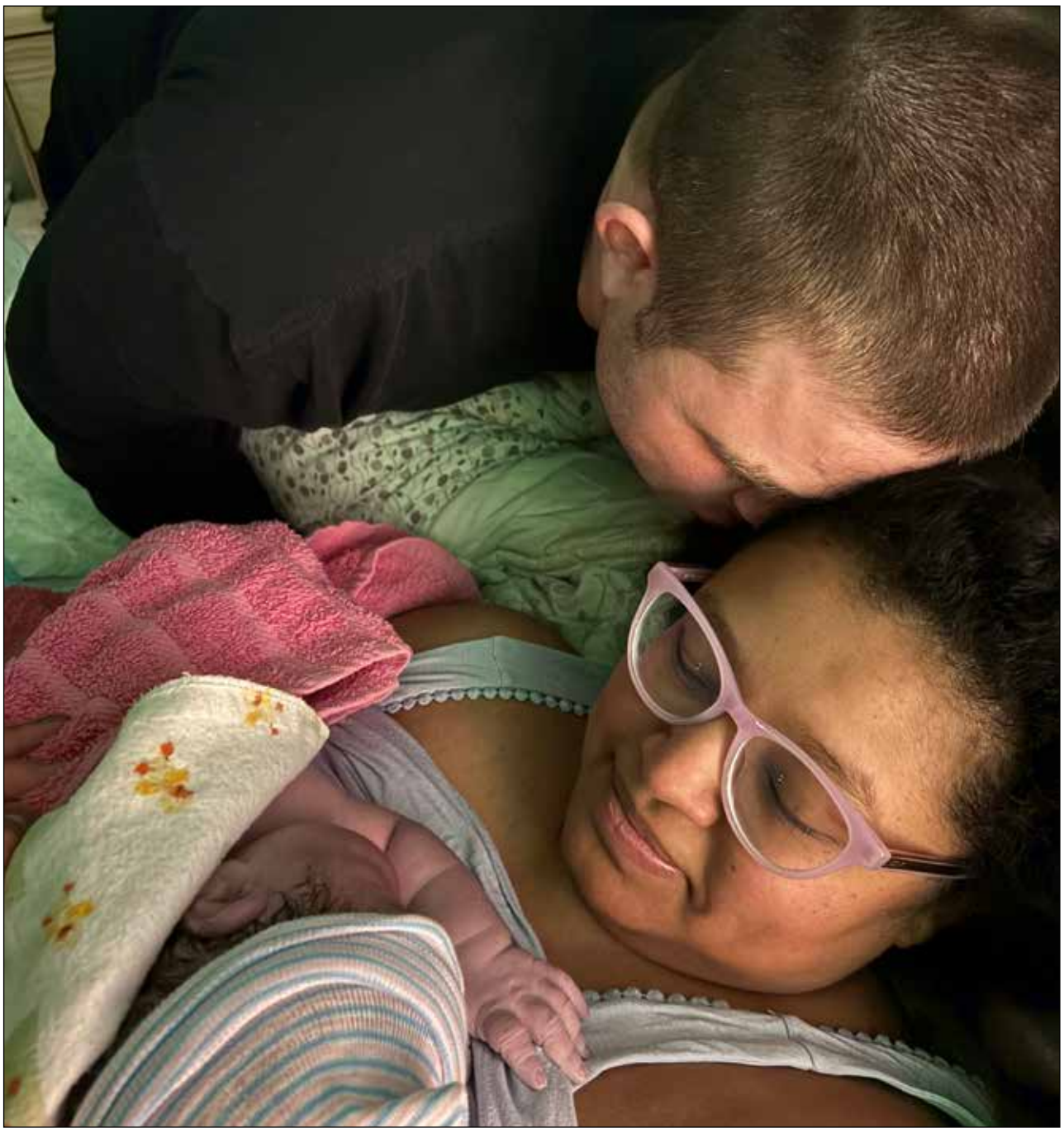
All of Teresa's siblings were born with the support of the Haliburton-Bancroft midwives as well, with the eldest being born in Peterborough, and the next two born at home in Harcourt.

Noella and Harley met while attending Algonquin College for architectural engineering in Ottawa. Harley originally hails from Haliburton County, so a few years ago, the couple returned to the community to start their family. "I've really come to like living up here," said Noella, "The city is too busy for me now."

And now that the couple have had their children in their Haliburton home, it makes the space that much more special. "I'm really glad I had Harley right next to me, encouraging and supporting me through each contraction," said Noella, "and the calmness from the midwives reassuring me that I had been in this position before, and I would be holding Teresa very soon."

As a family of six now, Noella shared that the big siblings - now ages six, five, and three - are really rising to the occasion of supporting their new baby sister. "We really do feel complete now," she said.

As Teresa kickstarts the busy year ahead for the Haliburton-Bancroft Midwives, the family is settling into their new routine, in their new chapter together. "I never thought we'd have the first baby in the county, on the first day of the new year," said Noella, "but now her birth story is that much more special."



Proud parents Harley and Noella welcomed their fourth child, Teresa, at their home on Jan. 1 with the help of the Haliburton-Bancroft Midwives. /submitted

Teresa Mae Floyd Foulds was the first baby born in Haliburton County by the Haliburton-Bancroft Midwives for 2026. /submitted

HCSA issues safety plea for Rail Trail riders

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

/FILE

The Haliburton County Snowmobile Association (HCSA) is issuing a reminder to riders as the season gets underway in the Highlands: slow down and stop, or risk losing more than just trail access.

In a candid statement on social media titled "WE NEED TO DO BETTER ... !!", the HCSA highlighted a dangerous trend on the Rail Trail. Despite clear markings and recent infrastructure upgrades, the association reports that a significant number of riders are ignoring basic safety laws.

"In chatting with one of our trailside neighbours over the weekend, we learned riders in droves are not coming to a full stop, and rolling through at driveway crossings," the association said in the statement. "This concern is not coming from the OPP; it's from our community."

HCSA president said in a recent telephone interview that the trail isn't just a recreation corridor, it's a residential area.

"The rail line, people are living on the rail line," Neil Vanderstoop said. "If you slow down to at least a walk ... It's far better than just [rolling through]."

The Rail Trail is one of the region's busiest corridors. During high-traffic periods like the Family Day weekend, the president reported more than 1,000 sleds heading north and 800 heading south in a single window last year. With more than 40 driveway and road crossings between Haliburton and Kinmount, the risk of a collision is a constant reality.

Vanderstoop noted that while "the majority of our riders are doing the right thing," he expressed frustration with those who disobey signage, including experienced riders.

"I followed three older men recently. They hardly hesitated at a stop sign," he said. "Which is very frustrating. We put this stuff on Facebook as reminders ... some people don't even understand. There are a lot of new people who ride snowmobiles that are just learning the ropes."

The HCSA noted in the social media post that there have been "tragic life-changing and life-ending consequences" on the Rail Trail. In an effort to prevent a potential tragedy, the county and landowners recently upgraded all stop signs to full-sized regulatory signs at road crossings.

Vanderstoop said that the consequences for ignoring the larger signs are much steeper than a simple trail fine. Blowing through a full-sized stop sign can impact a rider's actual driver's license.

While the 2026 season is just getting started, the OPP provided our papers with some year-end statistics around snowmobile-related traffic infractions. For 2025, the Haliburton Highlands Detachment saw 28 charges laid under the Motorized Snow Vehicle Act (MSVA) and 36 formal warnings issued.

While the OPP did not provide a specific breakdown of the offenses, MSVA charges typically involve:

- Failing to carry a valid trail permit
- Operating without proper insurance or registration
- Speeding on groomed trails
- Failing to wear a proper helmet
- Operating a snowmobile while under the influence

As for the HCSA, it is urging riders to respect the signs so that enforcement doesn't have to be the primary motivator for safety.

"We want you back next weekend," the association said.

Baring it all: *Calendar Girls* hits the stage

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

It's the talk of the town: a group of women headed to the stage to pose topless for a fundraising calendar.

At least, that's the plotline for the well-known film, *Calendar Girls*.

Based on a true story, the British film premiered in 2003, starring Helen Mirren, Julie Walters, Linda Bassett, Annette Crosbie, Celia Imrie, and Penelope Wilton. The storyline revolves around the middle-aged characters joining forces to shoot photos for a calendar, in an effort to raise money for cancer research through their women's group.

With the success of the film, a recent adaptation by writer Tim Firth has brought the story to the stage, and the local Highlands Little Theatre will be premiering the show in March.

"It's a recognizable title and storyline," said director of the show, Jack Brezina. "It was a real life story, then a movie, and now a stage play."

Casting for the local performance took place in December, with the show quickly cast and rehearsals kicking off the first week in January. "Everyone is local," said Brezina, noting the 14 roles, with which 13 individuals were cast (one doubling up based on stage timing). "It's an interesting challenge to put all the pieces together."

Brezina has directed and performed in a number of Highlands Little Theatre productions. The organization first formed in 1978, with a series of iconic and recognizable shows performed over the years. Brezina is eager to be in the director's chair once again for *Calendar Girls*. "I don't have to memorize lines anymore," he chuckled. "But I do have to know them."

With weekly rehearsals of the lovable show, the cast is set to hit the stage in Haliburton in March, with a handful of performances between March 18 to 21. Kate Butler has taken the lead as the producer of the show and Amy Brohm as the stage manager. With the production team's expertise in place, the behind the scenes details with costume changes and set development are well underway.

"Those familiar with the story in this play, will be aware that a number of women volunteer to pose discreetly nude for a fund-raising calendar for their rural Women's Institute," read the *Calendar Girls* audition package. "The play incorporates this aspect of the story line, with emphasis on discretion. The women cast in these roles will be expected to agree to participate in these scenes."

While there will be many moving pieces to the show, Brezina is confident that the cast will put together a high end result throughout the rehearsal process, with the professionalism displayed by the actors; the lead women in particular. "The talent of the six women who are the Calendar Girls, it makes things a lot easier," he said.

Tickets for the show will be available shortly. For more information, visit www.highlandstheatrelive.com.

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Girls' hockey returns to the ice

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Keep your stick on the ice, the high school girls' hockey team is back up and running.

The varsity team is comprised of students between Grades 9 to 12, with a variety of backgrounds and skill-sets in the sport. "Some are fairly new to the sport, and others play competitively in Haliburton, Bancroft, Lindsay, and Apsley," said head coach and high school teacher, Courtney Cook. "Our biggest challenge here was finding goalies. We had two brave souls step up that had never played hockey before."

Like many organized sports, following the COVID-19 pandemic, girls' high school hockey was put on the back-burner. "After COVID, sports in general struggled to get back up and running, and girls' hockey was no exception," said Cook. "I also grew up playing hockey, and some of my best memories involved high school hockey tournaments, so I wasn't willing to let our students here miss out on those opportunities."

With school support and the help of sponsors, including Smolen Dentistry, Outdoors Plus, Ecclestone Carpentry, Matt Duchene, and Karen Perrott, the group was able to get up and running once again. While the experience levels vary on the team, Cook is primarily focused on developing camaraderie amongst the players, and a level of self-confidence the players can carry well beyond their high school years. "As a team, our goal is to have fun and develop our hockey skills so that we can build towards having a team next year and into the future," she said.

The local team will be hosting their first tournament this week, at the AJ LaRue Arena in Haliburton. Games are set up in a tournament-style format, with one tournament a month for four months between December and March. For the first two tournaments, the team will play against the same three schools (LCVI, FFSS, and Brock). For the last two tournaments, they will play against three other schools in the area.

The coach encourages the community to come out to cheer the team on. For their first local tournament on Thursday, Jan. 15, they will be playing at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 2 p.m. in Haliburton. "The community can support our team by filling the stands at the AJ Larue Arena," said Cook.

"It is important to provide equal opportunity for all athletes in the school to develop teamwork, hard work, dedication, and skill that they can take with them and use outside of this building," added Cook, "and school sport is one way we provide those opportunities."

Stormy night

Wild winds and snow accumulation didn't stop performers or spectators from coming out to a Folk Society Open Stage on Saturday, Jan. 10. Hosted at the Haliburton Legion, the event welcomed many musicians to the stage for a memorable night of music. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Head Lake is pictured on an unusually mild January day. /ADAM FRISK staff

Soupy weather dampens weekend activities

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

The outdoor rink at Head Lake Park in Haliburton Village.

Above-seasonal temperatures, combined with rain and strong winds, dampened weekend activities throughout the county.

A late-week, spring-like weather pattern moved across the county on Thursday and Friday, forcing the closure of Sir Sam's Ski/Ride and halting snowmobile traffic across the area.

The Haliburton County Snowmobile Association (HCSA) announced late Wednesday evening that it had made "the difficult decision to shut down our 330-kilometre trail network."

"The snow is soft, and while we do have a bit of a base, it will rut up very quickly with any kind of traffic," HCSA said in a statement. "We pause to preserve your trails and believe that this timeout, hopefully a short one, won't hurt us too much. Please help by not riding."

The rain forced the temporary closure of the ski hill on Friday. Normal operations resumed the following day. Outdoor ice rinks were also closed throughout the county.

Environment and Climate Change Canada issued a special weather statement for Friday, warning of strong winds with gusts of 70 to 90 km/h as a cold front moved through the region.

By Saturday morning, more than 1,000 Hydro One customers were without power within the county.

The cold front ushered in a blast of snow Saturday night and into Sunday morning, dumping about 10 centimetres of the white stuff in the county.

Typical winter conditions are expected for the county for the rest of the week, according to the national weather agency.

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JENNIFER MCEATHRON, General Manager and Sales
jenniferm@haliburtonpress.com

EMILY STONEHOUSE, Managing Editor
emily@haliburtonpress.com

THOMAS SMITH, Journalist
thomas@haliburtonpress.com

ADAM FRISK, Journalist
adam@haliburtonpress.com

KAREN LONDON, Production Co-ordinator
karen@haliburtonpress.com

STACEY POTALIVO, Production

LAURA SMITH, Sales
laura@haliburtonpress.com

PAUL BANELOPOULOS, Sales
paul@haliburtonpress.com

AMANDA GONYEA
Inside Sales
classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

CIRCULATION
subscriptions@haliburtonpress.com

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But

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

IT'S DARK, the nights are long.

Swirling snow and screaming winds, we wake up to dig ourselves out.

Every day.

But, it's getting lighter.

The days are stretching thin.

Wisps of daylight curling around the edges of darkness.

The promise of warmth reaches the roses of our cheeks.

The news is bad.

All of it.

Innocent people killed, decisions made that impact our future.

The lives of our children, suddenly up for debate.

But, there is good news.

A new life brought into the world.

My son, belly laughing at a chickadee who visits our windowsill.

Care crushing cruelty, love limping over lashing.

The future is fake.

Artificial intelligence clampering up the hill.

Its role in our world leaves creatives crumbling.

But, there is beauty.

Somewhere out there, an artist is exploring a canvas.

A dancer twirls.

A musician sobs at the power of it all.

The world burns.

Wildfires rage, species shrivel up and die.

The last drops of water become a reality, as trees are toppled.

But, there is hope.

New inventions, prioritized politics.

Somewhere in the cold hard ground, a seed cracks open.

Certain that there is light above.

The bullies have won.

We watch them, every day.

Their mouths spewing hate, their actions causing harm.

Unravelling years of growth; diminishing decades to a spool of thread.

But, there is love.

People who look to the light.

Who side with good over evil.

Advocate instead of oppress.

Believe instead of bully.

The world is filled with polarizations. We live in a state of existence that tugs at our capacities. Through the screens where we absorb our world, we are shown every side of the sphere.

We must decide what to do with that constant inundation of information. It's easy to turn to the dark, but we must challenge every flip of the coin with the knowledge that there is another side. Hate, but love. Bad, but good. Fake, but real. Dark, but light.

There is hope, on that flipped side. Even during the darkest of days.

And while we may not always see it, at the very least, we must believe it is there.

Like a seed that seeks the light.

A power in perspective, through the rawness of reality.

Bubbles

Humans & Technology

Erin Kernohan-Berning

IT'S HARD to find any tech news lately that doesn't talk about the "AI bubble" with commentators trying to guess when it might pop. But what does all this actually mean? I'm definitely not an expert in the financial world, but here's what I've managed to make sense of through what I've been reading and watching.

There are different kinds of economic bubbles, but there are common threads. They occur in situations where investors buy into an asset at a rate that exceeds what the asset is worth. This is usually through speculation – where investors are banking on seeing a large return on their investment in a short period of time. Often there is a period of euphoria in which companies and investors see the asset as "the next big thing." Eventually, as excitement about that particular asset begins to wane, or the kind of growth or profits from that asset don't materialize, prices fall and ultimately crash as investors pull out their money and move on to something else.

Economic bubbles have occurred at various times in our history. In 1634, Tulip mania caused tulip prices to soar before abruptly crashing in 1637. Railway mania occurred in the UK with speculators investing heavily in railroad building before suddenly crashing in the 1840s. The bubble many compare the current state of AI investment to is the Dot-com bubble, which grew in the late 1990s before bursting in early 2000.

The Dot-com bubble occurred as people started to use the World Wide Web and investment began to flow to a large number of tech startups. When many of those companies failed to be profitable, investors backed out and stocks fell, causing a tech-heavy stock market to plummet. This caused a huge number of tech companies to shutter, and for many others to lose value. Some of the larger tech companies we know today (Amazon, Google, Nvidia, to name a few) are survivors of the Dot-com bubble.

There are several similarities that commentators are seeing between AI now and economic bubbles of the past. There is rapid growth in building infrastructure, with most major companies investing in the massive data centres and power generation needed to support the technology. This has resulted in new AI companies (like Open AI) as well as tech stalwarts (like Microsoft, Meta and Google) to borrow billions of dollars from investors and governments to bring their data centres to fruition. Right now, Nvidia is – for all intents and purposes – the sole supplier of the processing hardware used in these data centres and as a result recently became the world's first 5 trillion-dollar company. There is also a lot of AI-hype in the industry – something akin to investor euphoria.

The thing about bubbles, though, is that they aren't definitively considered bubbles until they burst. With AI companies accounting for the entirety of the GDP growth in the US, and a lot of speculative investing in those companies, worry that AI is experiencing a bubble appears pretty valid. But AI doesn't need to be a bubble to start causing economic trouble right now – and it already is.

Most electronic devices need a component called RAM (Random Access Memory). It's a critical part of many consumer devices like PCs and smartphones and is often used in more than one way in a single device – without it, these devices won't work. AI needs massive amounts of RAM. In the rush to build server-farms, AI companies have been buying massive quantities of RAM, and the few companies that manufacture it (there are only three: SK Hynix, Micron and Samsung) have started to shift away from making it for consumer electronics to concentrate on their more lucrative AI customers. In fact, Micron has completely shuttered their consumer memory division. This has resulted in a RAM shortage that is already driving up the price of consumer electronics. A memory upgrade for your PC that cost $120 last year now costs $600.

What this means for normal people like us is that the already expensive tech we use is going to become even more expensive for the foreseeable future and puts us in a Catch-22; we can try and limp along with our older devices but can wind up in a situation where a device outside of its support life becomes hazardous to use (i.e.: susceptible to being hacked etc.)

Unfortunately, I have zero idea how any of this is going to wind up. Economic bubbles bursting can have a variety of effects, from only affecting the players involved in the speculation that created the bubble in the first place, to further reaching consequences like mass unemployment and recessions. Regardless of there being a bubble or not, things aren't great for consumers right now while tech companies chase their AI pipe dreams.

points of view

Dangerous jobs

THIS MORNING, I was resetting a mouse trap in my garage when I suddenly felt a kinship to the brave people who do dangerous jobs everyday. For the record, it's not that easy to feel a kinship when you are hopping around with a mouse trap clamped onto your pinky and yelling "Ouch!"

Nevertheless, I did. And I also showed appreciation.

Mostly towards those brave people who go to their dangerous jobs every day, but only because they have convinced themselves it could be worse.

This is something I thought too. As I tried to set that diminutive mousetrap, my thought was, "At least, I am not trying to set a bear trap."

Afterwards, I discovered we each have different limits when it comes to personal bravery and risk aversion. And I learned that dealing with mouse traps just happens to be mine. And, even then, that extends no further than my garage. I don't care how much they paid me, I would never check mouse traps in a nudist colony, especially the glue board types.

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

But that's just me.

There are people in this world who do dangerous stuff for us as a matter of routine, and I think it is high time we showed some gratitude to them.

So, let me begin by thanking the person or persons whose job it is to confirm the expiry date on milk. And, next time you have to use one, remember that some brave soul had to test that laxative to ensure it didn't work too well. Also, recall that there are things far worse than kale that we don't have to eat – tofurkey immediately comes to mind. Why? Because some fearless person already tried them for us – may they rest in peace.

Pioneers like these are the unsung heroes who walk among us. And they have been doing so for countless generations. They are why we know, without ever having to experience it, that when you hit your thumb with a sledgehammer, it's going to hurt. They are the reasons why bareback porcupine riding never became a rodeo event.

I know. We think these things are self-evident. But never forget someone had to prove it to us somewhere along the line. If not for those brave people, we would not have fences at our zoos and we'd still be wearing red shirts around bulls.

These people are why the human race has progressed this far.

But I digress.

Right now, the smarter ones among you are probably thinking that I am being a bit too humble about my near-death experience with that mouse trap. I get it.

But, I am not a hero.

No, I am just a simple man who is now typing with what can only be referred to as a manual limp. Oh sure, I acted as point man on the dangers of setting mouse traps. And, yes, I took the hit so others might not have to.

But hero?

OK, who am I to argue?

The point is, I had my finger suddenly crushed by a mouse trap, so you do not have to. Learn from my experience. Do better. Pass it along to your kids. Otherwise, my sacrifice, however accidental, will be for naught.

Will I do it again? Probably.

Will I get caught again? Who knows?

All I can say is, with mousetraps, hope springs eternal.

pic *of the* past

A typical lumbering camp of the day and in this particular photograph is a lumber camp operated by Ed Robertson for the John Laking company of Haliburton. Ed Robertson is shown on the left in a white shirt in the early 1900s. Photo from the *Echo* archives, originally courtesy of Murray Robertson of Minden.

A night out

MONIKA HAD been looking forward to this all day. When Jim phoned and asked if she wanted to check out the new eatery, she had agreed immediately. While she always liked a good meal, she also enjoyed getting out of the house during the dark January days. So a short drive to the next town was a welcomed diversion.

It had stopped snowing that afternoon, leaving the highway with a thick covering of white untouched as yet by the township's trucks. But she and Jim knew it would probably be fine to drive, given Jim's reliable truck and years of driving experience. The only concern was any unexpected deer jumping in front of them as they travelled along.

Down Our road

Sharon Lynch

But that didn't happen and so they pulled into a packed parking lot ready for a tasty meal. Fortunately Jim had called in a reservation, guaranteeing a seat. A warm glow of soft light and background conversation greeted them as they walked through the door.

The eatery was alive with activity as servers moved quickly between tables, the bar and the kitchen. Jim and Monika were seated in a side table for two and after ordering their food, they both took time to look around at their fellow diners.

It's easy to feel like a bit of a hermit stuck inside at that time of year and Monika in particular was glad for a change of scene. And what better than people watching? Jim agreed. He'd been cutting wood and shovelling his neighbours' roofs, all solitary activities.

Around them, small groups and couples had their heads together in conversation between bites while others waited in anticipation. Jim was watching the next table over, behind Monika's back and so she had to rely on him for any interesting observations. He noted there appeared to be something going on between a young woman and another diner. As the younger one consumed more wine, Jim saw her cheeks starting to flush. At the same time the older person across the table from her appeared to stiffen and look away. Jim was curious as to what was happening but of course, could not know.

A couple on the other side of the room only had eyes for each other. For a moment Monika was lost in nostalgia. Ah life, she thought, sipping her own wine.

A party of four, apparently friends or perhaps family were sharing food. One person took a bite, made a comment and then passed another fork full to one of the group. Heads nodded. Forks were lifted. Smiles appeared immediately. Obviously they were enjoying themselves. No unspoken tension or romance of the century happening there.

The meal was delicious and Jim and Monika lingered over it, not wanting the evening to draw to a close. Chores awaited each of them at their homes: fires to be poked back into life, new snow to clear off the steps and animals needing attention. Their fellow diners were like ships that pass in the night.

Warm up your Saturday night with an Old Time Winter Square Dance

Winter's here and it's time to celebrate with an Old Time Winter Square Dance!

Dance Happens Here Haliburton (DH3) is partnering with Hike Haliburton, Winter Edition and February Folk Festival to host an Old Time Winter Square Dance on Saturday, Feb. 7. The event will be held at the Haliburton Legion, 719 Mountain St. and doors will open at 7 p.m.

Caller Hannah Shira Naiman will be teaching the steps and calling the dances while bluegrass musicians Nathan Smith, Kyle Kirkpatrick and Tim O'Reilly will provide the tunes. The evening will include instruction and a chance for all to participate. When asked to describe the type of dance she will lead, Hannah said, "The one thing I can guarantee is that everyone will have fun." Participants will have a chance to try out square dances, contra dances (in lines) and circle dances. DH3 is excited that the evening will also include a performance by a local group of Haliburton Scottish Country Dancers.

Participants in Hike Haliburton, Winter Edition can enjoy the beautiful Haliburton Highlands outside during the day, then enjoy with some dancing fun in the evening. The event is also a part of February Folk Festival, highlighting fantastic folk music happening at venues across the county in the month of February. Dance Happens Here chair, Jim Blake says, "It will be a lively way for the community to come together - an old-fashioned square dance - the kind of dancing that everyone can do, whether you're experienced or an absolute beginner."

Tickets can be purchased at dancehappenshere.com or in person at Redmans Records. Prices are $20 for adults, $10 for college students and free for high school students and children.

This event is possible with the support of the Government of Canada, the County of Haliburton and donations to DH3.

DH3 is part of the Haliburton County Community Co-operative.

For more details visit www.dancehappenshere.com.

Submitted

Peek-a-boo pine marten by Tammy Nash

Investigation leads to seizure of drugs and two arrests

The Haliburton Highlands Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) have arrested and charged two individuals following an investigation involving drugs.

On Tuesday, Jan. 6, members of the Haliburton Highlands OPP Detachment and the Community Street Crime Unit (CSCU) executed a search warrant at a location on Parkside Street in Minden. Items seized include 63.5 grams of fentanyl, nine grams of cocaine, $195 Canadian currency and two shotgun shells.

As a result of the investigation, a 69 year old of Minden and a 46 year old of Minden have been charged with:

- Possession of a schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking - two counts
- Possession of proceeds of property obtained by crime under $5,000

Both accused are scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Minden at a later date.

If you have any information about the trafficking of illicit substances in Haliburton County, call the OPP at 1-888-310-1122 or should you wish to remain anonymous, you can call the Kawartha/Haliburton Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), or go online at www.khcrimestoppers.com where you may be eligible to receive a cash reward of up to $2,000.

Submitted

Two people charged with drug trafficking after public tip

Members of the Bancroft Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) have seized over $10,000 worth of drugs in the town of Bancroft.

On Thursday, Jan. 8, shortly before 10 p.m., officers received an anonymous tip from the public regarding drugs and a possible wanted person. Officers located the person in a parking lot. During the investigation two people were arrested and a search of the vehicle located over 85 grams of suspected methamphetamine, over 78 grams of suspected cocaine, cash, scales, dime bags and two cell phones.

As a result, a 33 year old of Bancroft was charged with the following:

- Possession of firearm or ammunition contrary to a prohibition order - four counts
- Possession of a prohibited device or ammunition
- Fail to comply with a probation order - two counts
- Possession of a Schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking - two counts.

And a 35 year old of Highlands East Township was charged with the following:

- Possession of a prohibited device or ammunition
- Fail to comply with an undertaking

Possession of a Schedule I substance for the purpose of trafficking - two counts

Both accused were held for bail and are scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Belleville.

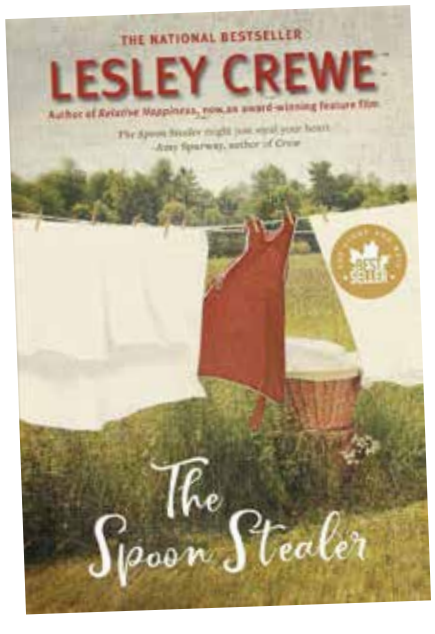
Submitted

Minden Memories

At a local logging camp, the cook can be seen holding a triangle, calling the crew to a meal. Logging operations were in full swing during the winter months in Minden, when frozen lakes and snow-packed ground made hauling timber far easier. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre.

Book of the Week

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



Emmeline never quite fit in on her family's rural Nova Scotian farm. After the losses of the First World War, she fled to England and built a new life. Now retired, she lives by the sea with her small white dog Vera and is making an effort to talk to more humans. Joining a memoir-writing course at the library, her humor, energy, and riveting stories win over skeptical classmates, and she even reveals her third-biggest secret: she is a compulsive spoon stealer.

When she unexpectedly inherits her childhood farm, Emmeline returns like a whirlwind. She is off-kilter, bold, and mischievous. Through laughter, generosity, and hard-earned wisdom, she shows that a spoonful of kindness can help heal a family fractured by loss and secrecy.

The Spoon Stealer by Lesley Crewe is available at the Haliburton County Public Library as a book or Book Club Set. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Razz launches 2026 lineup

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Theatre is for everyone, and that's the mindset for the organizers of Razzamamatz Kids' Shows. "Razzamataz chooses shows that are primarily for a young audience, but all ages are welcome," said chair of the committee, Nicole Stewart. "We have been working in the community for over 40 years to bring high quality, affordable, and culturally diverse theatre to children and families."

On Sunday, Jan. 25, Razz will be presenting a special Valentine's themed performance, titled *Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch*. The heartwarming story follows the lives of three washerwomen, Betsy, Edna and Molly, as they bring Mr. Hatch to life, and help them search for his secret admirer.

"This show will dazzle young and old alike with its beautiful puppetry, song and story," said Stewart. "It examines the effect that kindness can have on a lonely existence."

Following the show, the performers will be offering a puppet workshop to attendees. The show is based on a book of the same name written by Eileen Spinelli, and performed by Axis Theatre from British Columbia. "It is our first puppet show this year, and is a special Valentine's themed show," said Stewart.

Razz will be offering two other shows past the January performance: *The Old Man and the River* on March 8, and Chris McKhool with the performance *Earth, Seas, and Air* on April 8.

The Old Man and the River will also be performed for Cardiff Elementary School and the Stuart Baker kindergarten classes following the stage performance. Making sure theatre is accessible for all is one of the key mandates of Razzamataz Kids' Shows, and is made possible by community contributions from Haliburton County Development Corporation, Haliburton Arts Council, Canoe FM, the Haliburton Legion, and the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School.

Razzamamatz Kids' Shows will be welcoming the show *Somebody Loves You Mr. Hatch* as their special Valentine's performance at the end of the month. /submitted

"The show features beautifully designed puppetry without works, performed alongside an enchanting musical score," said Stewart. "It reveals a storybook world where rivers sing, trees laugh and dragonflies come to visit. It is suitable for children of all ages and sensibilities. There will also be a puppet workshop offered following the show."

For the April 12 performance by Juno-award winning musician Chris McKhool, environmentalism will be on the forefront. "He's bringing a show that is part musical performance, part environmentalism and 100 per cent fun," said Stewart. "This show will be fully interactive and get kids singing, dancing and talking about taking care of the earth."

More details about these shows can be found on at www.razzamataz.ca

Razzamataz, a not-for-profit organization that prioritizes accessibility to the arts for all ages, is actively seeking support from individuals and businesses who want to sponsor this work. If you are interested in sponsoring a show or would like to learn, Stewart encourages you to reach out to info@razzamataz.ca.

Tickets for the upcoming shows can be purchased online, or at the door prior to the performance. *Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch* will be performed on Sunday, Jan. 25 at 2 p.m. at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion in Haliburton.

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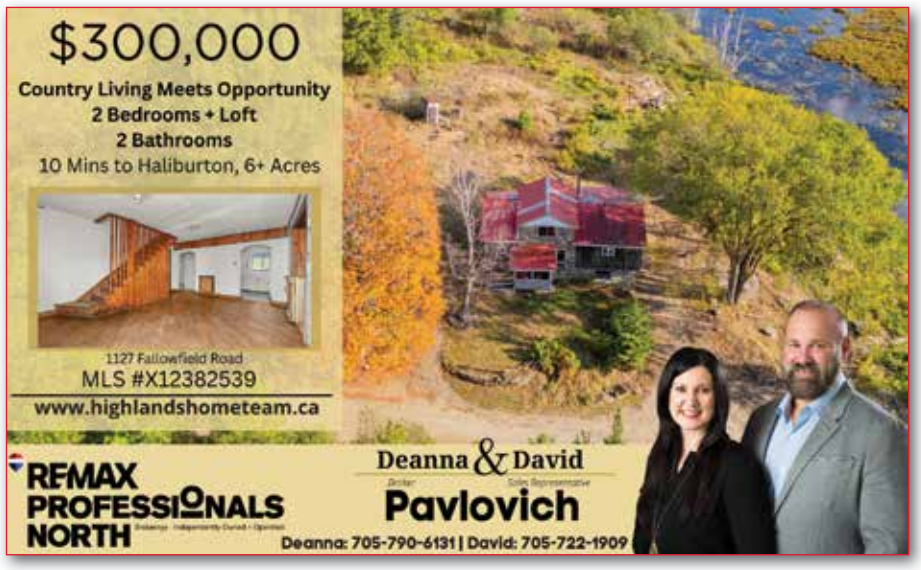

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End of an era: Haliburton bids farewell to Beer Store

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

The atmosphere at the Haliburton Beer Store on its final day of operation on Sunday was a mix of nostalgia, frustration, and camaraderie. As the doors closed for the last time, familiar faces gathered to share memories and to vent over a storefront that has been a community staple for nearly half a century.

For Frank Powers, the closure is deeply personal. Powers was the original manager of the location, opening the doors in June 1976 and spent 26 years as boss at the store.

"I started with the company in '65 ... can you believe that?" Powers said Sunday. "It's all politics, but Minden lost the hospital, and we lost the beer store. So, who won?"

Edward Whiteway, a former long-time part-time employee, who balanced shifts at the store with his career as a teacher, worked alongside Powers for years and reflected on the store.

"Frank and I had a great time together," Whiteway recalled. "We had some really good years."

Former employee Courtney Barnum also stopped by to witness the final hours. "I'm very sad to see it go," Barnum said. "It's such a big part of our community for a long time."

For locals, like Wayne Smith, the closure is more than just sentimental. Smith expressed concern about the influx of seasonal residents who will now have to travel to the next closest town to return empties.

Frank Powers, who was the first manager of the Haliburton Beer Store nearly 50 years ago, is pictured with current manager Shannon Stinson on Sunday. In a bittersweet moment, Powers was the last customer to be served at the store before it closed permanently. /ADAM FRISK staff

"All these cottagers are going to have to go to Minden, man," Smith said. "You're going to be standing in line out with your empties there in the summertime. It's going to be brutal."

Smith joked about the logistics of returning his empties now that the Beer Store is closed.

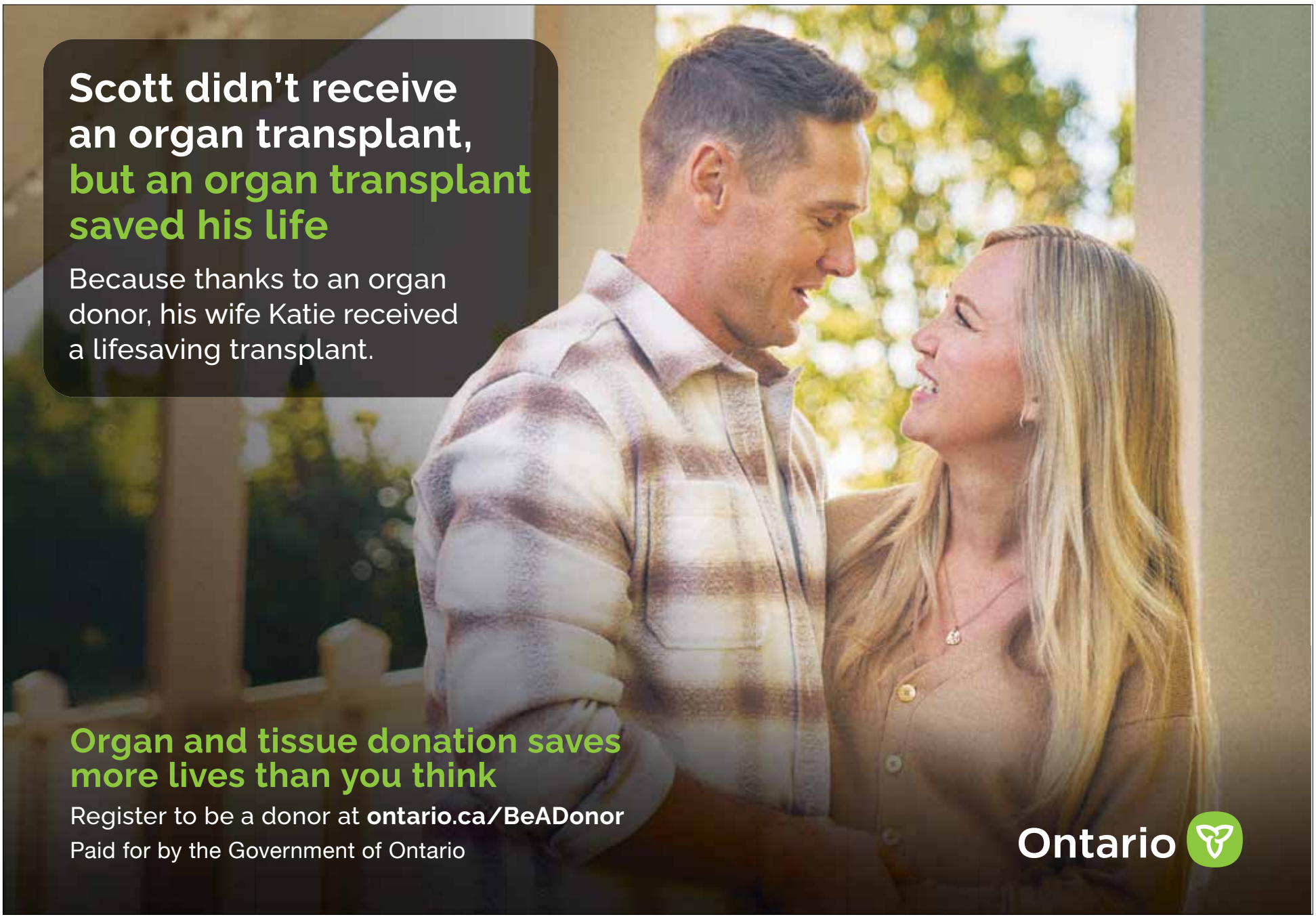
"I guess I'll just end up with a great big pickup load and head her down there sometime when it's not too busy," he said.

He went on to suggest that for those who don't want to make the drive: "You can take it to the fish hatchery and donate it ... they're good people."

As for the beloved final manager of the store, Shannon Stinson is set to transition to the Minden location.

"I'm really, really gonna miss Shannon," Barnum said.

Despite the closure, the mood outside in the parking lot was upbeat as a large group gathered for one last toast. While the Haliburton store may be gone, the stories of the people who ran the Beer Store, from the original manager to the locals who worked part-time, will forever remain a permanent part of the town's social fabric.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Beer Store closure a logistical headache for residents, landfill

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

The closure of the Haliburton Beer Store has turned a routine chore into a cross-county trek, leaving residents and municipal officials facing a logistical headache.

With the nearest options to return empties now located in Minden or West Guilford, some are concerned that the minimum 30-kilometre round trip will lead to a spike in glass waste at the village landfill, or worse, in local ditches.

With no designated place to return empties in the village, the burden of alcohol bottle disposal has shifted onto the community, sparking questions about who is ultimately responsible for the waste left behind and the potential environmental impact it may have.

Under provincial regulations, alcohol containers are prohibited from the recycling program and must be returned to authorized locations. Without a local option, there's concern of a regression in waste habits.

"We certainly don't want to see our ditches filling up with liquor bottles any more than they already are," Susan Hay, president of Environment Haliburton!, said in a telephone interview.

Hay suggested that people will likely combine the task of returning empties with other errands they have to do while in Minden or West Guilford, noting that "it's just an inconvenience."

"I'm far more concerned about organic material going into landfill sites where it produces methane and affects climate change than I am about the glass," she said. "But it is a problem."

To keep alcohol empties out of the general waste stream, the Haliburton landfill provides small containers near the large, open recycling bins. However, the municipality notes that the current infrastructure, essentially half-barrels, is likely too small for the looming influx of glass.

"I think with the inconvenience ... a lot more people would mix it in with the recycling or hopefully separate it into the separate bins," Ashley Dembinski, the municipality's environmental manager, said in a telephone interview.

The town is looking to increase the number of bins to prevent the site from being overwhelmed and to ensure glass doesn't end up buried in the main landfill containers, she noted.

So what happens to the empties that are dropped off at the landfill? The task of returning the bottles falls on landfill staff. Dembinski confirmed that the deposit money has become an informal staff "perk," often used to buy site decorations or treats for dogs visiting the dump.

While "not the most PR-friendly" solution, the environmental manager noted it keeps the glass moving offsite and out of the landfill after a previous search for a charity partner came up empty.

"Right now, it kind of has been a perk since we have no one else interested in taking them off our hands," she said. "It keeps [staff] motivated, and it keeps [the empties] out of the dump."

For Hay, the issue goes beyond convenience. It's about corporate accountability and the policy of "Extended Producer Responsibility," where companies profiting from these products should be responsible for their end-of-life disposal.

"The producers are supposed to be responsible for the end of their product," she said. "If the Beer Stores aren't close enough, the LCBO should be taking them back."

However, like Ontario's grocery stores, the LCBO has a deal in place with the Beer Store to handle empties.

As the village adjusts to life without a Beer Store, the municipality is hopeful that a local non-profit might eventually take over the landfill collection, similar to models used in neighbouring communities.

Businesses booming between holiday dates

from page 1

memorable sale. "I definitely sold a cowbell secretly to somebody who was in a car with six people and who was going to surprise them with it in the middle of the road trip.

"We Googled all the songs, the cowbell solos, and she made a playlist," Redman said with a laugh.

The holiday spirit carried over to restaurants, with hungry shoppers dining out in town. At Juna, the week between Christmas and New Year's saw the dining room reach capacity.

"It was lovely," said server Andrea Hildebrand. "We were very busy between Christmas and New Year's. That week was busy - lunches, dinners, we were full every day. It was great."

Businesses are now bracing for the inevitable post-holiday quiet, a standard part of the business cycle.

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April 2025 Year in Review

An ice storm slammed the county in early spring, with thousands of trees snapped and a state of emergency issued in Minden Hills. The storm took weeks to clean up, and considerations are still in effect nearly a year after the damages. /FILE

Minden Hills calls state of emergency

The Township of Minden Hills declared a state of emergency in light of the ice storm that ravaged Haliburton County over the weekend, leaving the vast majority of residents without access to hydro, internet, or cellphone service. The County of Haliburton declared a partial state of emergency the evening of March 31, 2025. "The County Emergency Operations Centre has been established and is monitoring the situation," said the County in a media release. "(We are) working with the Township of Minden Hills, Province, and neighbouring municipalities to address conditions."

Poor road conditions and declining visibility resulted in a wealth of community events being postponed or cancelled altogether over the weekend. While the whole county was slammed by the storm, it is apparent that Minden took the biggest hit, with power lines and internet down for multiple days.

Hal High reconnects with music

"Take a deep breath in," says Meghan Mardus, the music teacher at Haliburton Highlands Secondary School. "Feet flat on the floor. Check your body. Okay, let's go."

This was how the students started their day on a particularly dull and dreary April morning. After morning announcements and cartons of chocolate milk hurriedly chugged by the door, they gathered themselves with their instruments. Flutes, trumpets, a trombone, clarinets, a few small tubas, and drums. "We all started playing together in February of this year," explained Mardus, "and no one in this class has prior experience with the instrument they are on."

Canoe FM volunteers continue to give back

If Canoe FM did not have their 120 volunteers, our community would notice.

It would suddenly get a whole lot quieter, that's for sure. "We've got a good team," said station manager Roxanne Casey, "we've got people who help with every part of the studio."

One of the large projects Casey and her dedicated team of volunteers has recently completed is the newly launched 97.1 station in Minden. "There was a dead zone in Minden," she noted. "So we've been trying for years to get that filled, and we are finally able to do it."

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Candidates meeting draws full house

The Lindsay BIA and the Lindsay Chamber joined forces to offer the only major candidates meeting in our riding on April 15 at the Pie Eyed Monk in the heart of Lindsay.

While all candidates were invited, the only individuals present were Nell Thomas for the Liberal Party and Jamie Schmale for Conservatives. The event began at 6:30 p.m., and within minutes, it was standing room only, with dozens being turned away at the doors due to the capacity of the space.

Minden on 'constant watch' for flooding

It was touch and go, but the staff in Minden Hills are optimistic about pending flood risks. "So far, it looks okay," said Minden Mayor Bob Carter. "But we are going to be on a flood watch for the next two weeks."

In light of the ice storm that slammed Haliburton County the last weekend of March, many wash-outs have been caused not by increasing water levels, but by debris clogging up the culverts. "With all the debris from the storm, we are seeing more frequent blockages," said Carter.

A family celebrates the Easter weekend at Abbey Gardens during their annual springtime event. /FILE

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Teacher Meghan Mardus conducts a classroom full of eager students during the return of the high school music program in April. The program had been put on pause for many years. /FILE

May 2025 Year in Review

Zilstra hangs up his publishing hat

It's all about the people. For David Zilstra, that's what it's always been. 36 years in the newspaper industry. Countless boards, organizations, and volunteer opportunities. Awards and plaques stacked up on his desk, including a nod as the community's Highlander of the Year.

But it's all about the people. That's what kept him going. Every step of the way.

After nearly four decades of dedication and service, Zilstra will be hanging up his publishing hat. He started with the *Haliburton Echo* in 2005, having already committed years to the industry in Napanee. He had originally started with sales and ad management, before naturally evolving into publishing and the multi-faceted components of that role.

A Haliburton Forest Pupdate

The Haliburton Forest Wolf Centre announced last week that one of the wolves, Quest, had successfully delivered puppies at the educational facility. "While there was no visible way to see if Quest was in fact pregnant, we felt fairly confident and had high hopes for little ones," said Marena Wigmore, the manager for the Wolf Centre.

Identified as an Ontario Signature Educational Experience, the Wolf Centre dedicates itself to educating the public about wolf behaviour and ecology. With a small pack that resides at the facility, the staff are hands-off with the resident wolves, ensuring they maintain their natural tendencies around the seven acre enclosure they call home. The female puppy survived infancy, and is currently thriving at the education site.

Minden Pride becomes Pride in the Highlands

A rebrand, a shift, a change, a transformation. That's the journey Minden Pride is currently on.

Actually, Minden Pride is now a thing of the past. The not-for-profit, volunteer-run organization has now officially renamed themselves Pride in the Highlands; a decision formalized during their Town Hall meeting on May 10. "We thought, 'how can we represent a whole county, while still honouring the origins of Minden Pride,'" said Pride co-chair, Chris Hewson. "Part of our mandate is to ensure we are meeting everyone where they are at."

Canada Post refuses overtime

On Friday, May 23, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) have shared that a full strike is not on the radar for the time being. Instead, they will refuse all overtime beyond eight hours a day and 40 hours a week. "At this time, the union has decided to proceed with an overtime ban to minimize disruptions to the public and lost days for members," the union said in a statement.

The rebuttal is a part of the ongoing negotiations between the Crown and the CUPW, which first came to the spotlight in November of last year, when 55,000 Canada Post workers went on strike for 32 days leading up to the holiday season.

First Responders Day had community stations buzzing as they opened their doors to the public in an effort to educate all ages on first response. /FILE

Skyline Park looks ahead

It's a place nearly everyone in the community has visited, seen, or at the very least, heard of.

But Skyline Park has needed a little extra love since the 1950s. Recently, Haliburton Rotary has stepped up to beautify the property.

"This is probably one of the largest projects that the Haliburton Rotary Club has taken on in its 80 years of existence," said Rotary member Charles Wheeler, who doubles as the chair of Rotary's Skyline Park Project Committee.

This isn't an overnight project. Rotary is looking at years down the line.

Over the next three years, the club intends to clean up the site, build new picnic pavilions, infographics highlighting the region's history, Indigenous ties, and natural features, and most recently: permanent washroom facilities.

Minden cell tower raises concerns

Residents along Bobcaygeon Road and the surrounding area questioned the approval of a 70-metre cell tower structure being built on private land.

The proposed tower is located northeast of the Bobcaygeon Road and Scotch Line intersection in Minden. Flyers were distributed to a broader area, with residents being notified of the plans for the tower in February of this year. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) requires residents within 210 metres of the tower be notified as part of public consultation.

Understanding government; how one event is looking to help

There's no shortage of mumblings and grumblings about local government. That's why Minden Council chose to give the green light to host an upcoming Engaging in Democracy event, through the Healthy Democracy Project. "This is something that's very important to our communities, especially in these political times," said Councillor Pam Sayne when Minden council met on May 8. "What we're hoping is that more people will be encouraged to vote, and also run." Sayne looked around the table in the council chambers, and noted that the Healthy Democracy Project is a tool to try to get younger people interested in running for council, "to participate in the process," she said.

Haliburton Highlands Secondary School hosted their first Culture Fest on May 14 in an effort to increase knowledge around Indian culture. Through the Interact Club, the school is partnered with the Mahatma Gandhi Siksha Sadan in India. Many students lined up to get henna tattoos, a traditional art form practiced in India. /FILE

Recipients of certificates of appreciation through Pride in the Highlands during their May Open House included from left, Liz Jesserman, David Rankin, Mike McKeon, Jackie Wells, Bob Baynton-Smith, Jim Sargent, and Bob Fisher. /FILE

June 2025 Year in Review

Kenzie Misco and Emma Deterling competed together as a team in the horse show at the county fair. /FILE

Trillium Lakelands District School Board hosted their third annual TLDSB Pow Wow and Drum Social to kick start National Indigenous History Month on June 5 at the high school. The event was organized by the Indigenous Student Success Team. Attendees were guided through various teachable moments from Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee perspectives to increase understanding and engagement with Indigenous culture, traditions, protocols, and peoples, strengthening community relationships and breaking down barriers or misconceptions about pow wows and drum socials. /FILE

Pigs and plans; rezoning moves forward in AH

While the decision does not appease everyone, the ongoing conversation around a hobby farm in Algonquin Highlands has reached its conclusion. AH Mayor Liz Danielsen opened the special meeting of council by addressing the full house in attendance. "I really would like to thank everyone for coming," said Danielsen. "It is a bit of a delight to have a room of people showing their interest, and it's rare." A testament to the concern surrounding rezoning the property in question from Shoreline Residential to Rural, which would allow for the growth and development of a hobby farm, including pigs, chickens, and fruit trees. While the initial recommendation from Algonquin Highlands staff was to refuse the application, Danielsen made the suggestion that council support the application, with site plan control. Council members agreed, unanimously.

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ONTARIO

Healthy Democracy Project kicks off in Haliburton Highlands

The wheels are in motion to get interested individuals running for local council.

At an open house held at the Minden Community Centre, over 100 eager citizens came out to listen to a presentation from two representatives from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). Every Minden Hills councillor was present, with absence noted from neighbouring municipalities representation.

United Church celebrates 100 years: Rev. Max Ward reflects

Max Ward has been a minister with the United Church of Canada for over 20 years. There have been a lot of changes to the church in that time.

"It's hard to think of the church as only 100 because it took the United Churches a long time to bring it together," said Ward. "The United Church is something pretty unique to Canada and I'm proud to be a part of it."

Paikin brings the life of John Turner to light

Steve Paikin has been a writer and reporter for news agencies such as CBC and TVO. He is an author, a television host, and the moderator for a number of past debates at federal and provincial levels. Nearly every Canadian knows his name.

And on June 12, his popularity became apparent in Haliburton County.

Paikin was invited to conclude this season's stacked lineup of the Telling Our Stories Speaker Series; a monthly event that draws crowds from across the county, eager to hear about a variety of eclectic topics brought to the table. Hosted at the Pinestone, the event drew hundreds of eager attendees.

Warm weather encourages people to head outside and try new things, like goat yoga at Bethel Heights Farm. /FILE

Athletes of the year named for Hal High

It was a night of celebration, a night of stardom.

The 45th annual Haliburton Highlands Secondary School Athletic Banquet was held at the high school on June 10. Teacher Janice Scheffee kicked off the ceremony, noting that the school had 18 competing teams this year across the grades, including some new sports, such as girls rugby and ultimate frisbee. "You should all be very proud of yourselves," said Scheffee. The winners of the prestigious title of "Athletes of the Year" were Cheyenne Degeer and Graham Backus.

Meet Adam Frisk, our new reporter

Photographer, journalist, and Haliburton local Adam Frisk joins the roster of staff at the *Haliburton Echo* and *Minden Times*. Frisk dove into the job with professionalism and dedication, and rounded out our team at the newspaper.

Hal High Athletes of the Year were Cheyenne Degeer and Graham Backus. The students were honoured during a June ceremony. /FILE

2025 Minden Christmas Bird Count results

ED POROPAT
Guest Columnist

An adult Bald Eagle takes flight. /Photos by Ed Poropat

A male Evening Grosbeak basks in the morning sunshine

The 59th annual Minden Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Sunday, Dec. 14, with a record 35 field observers surveying birds within the standardized count circle. Additional data were provided by feeder-watchers monitoring activity in their own yards. Conditions were cool and sunny, though a brisk wind developed later in the day. By the end of the 24-hour count period, observers recorded 33 species and 3,355 individual birds, both well below the 20-year averages of 46 species and 4,263 birds. An additional three species were found during count week.

The Minden CBC began in 1967, when local naturalist Dennis Barry and his mentor, George Scott, were the only two participants. Since then, the count has grown steadily in size and popularity. Over its 59-year history, an impressive 110 species have been recorded - making Minden one of the most diverse Christmas Bird Counts on the Canadian Shield.

The count circle includes Moore Falls, Kinmount, Gelert, Lochlin, Ingoldsby, and Minden. It is one of nearly 500 counts conducted across Canada each winter, and approximately 2,700 across North America. All data are submitted to the Audubon Society and contribute to continent-wide tracking of bird populations, movements, and long-term conservation planning.

Poor seed production across much of the boreal forest this past summer has had a noticeable impact on winter bird numbers. Seed-eating species have dispersed in search of food, resulting in roaming flocks of Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Grosbeaks, and Redpolls passing through the region. While some are stopping briefly at local feeders, many are continuing on due to limited natural food sources.

Cold temperatures and low water levels led to extensive ice cover, reducing waterfowl diversity during this year's count. Trumpeter Swans (14) and Mallards (313) continued to do well, while American Black Ducks declined to just three individuals - the lowest total since 1996. Canada Goose (six), Common Goldeneye (29), and Hooded Merganser (seven) were present in below-average numbers, and a single Common Loon lingered on open water at Mountain Lake.

Wild Turkeys (163) remained stable, but Ruffed Grouse dropped to a single bird - the lowest count since records began in 1967. Raptors were scarce, with only two Red-tailed Hawks and two Barred Owls observed. Bald Eagles were a bright spot, with a record 26 counted, including 14 seen together at the landfill, indicating a strong wintering population.

Rock Pigeons (306) reached a record high, while Mourning Doves (121) were also plentiful. Despite heavy ice cover, one Belted Kingfisher remained in the area, foraging actively along open stretches of the Gull River.

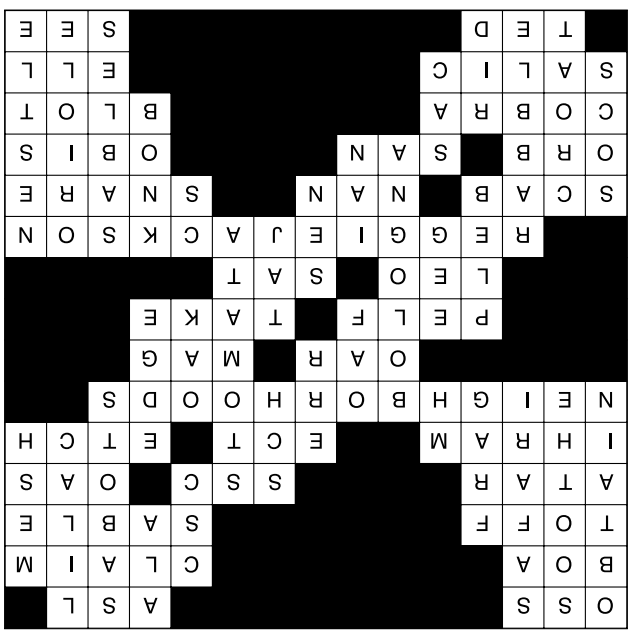
Woodpecker numbers were lower than average, including Hairy (56) and Downy (26), though fewer feeders may have affected detection. Four Pileated Woodpeckers were recorded, and two Red-bellied Woodpeckers - a still uncommon species locally - were a notable highlight. A healthy acorn crop in the fall meant that some Blue Jays (283) have decided to brave the winter. Black-capped Chickadee (767) numbers remain well below average. Aside from supplemental feeding at feeders, food availability in the woods is limited, which likely prompted many individuals to migrate to more productive feeding areas.

Some winter finches were present, but none occurred in exceptional numbers. The colourful, gregarious Evening Grosbeak (545) was well represented during the count, although numbers remain well below the nearly 1,200 birds recorded in the 1990s. A few Pine Grosbeaks (50) added a splash of pink to the snowy landscape as they searched for fruit and berries. The soft twittering of American Goldfinches (183) could still be heard in several locations within the count circle, despite many having left the area in search of food; among them was a single Pine Siskin. A small number of Dark-eyed Juncos (30) and American Tree Sparrows (32) were also counted, most of them associated with feeding stations.

Several species were conspicuously absent this year. Common Merganser, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Snow Bunting were not observed during either count day or count week, despite each having been recorded on more than fifty previous counts. Notably, the day after the count, a lingering Winter Wren (one) and a scarce Black-backed Woodpecker (one) were discovered at Dahl Forest. In addition, Northern Cardinals (three) were reported visiting a feeder in Minden.

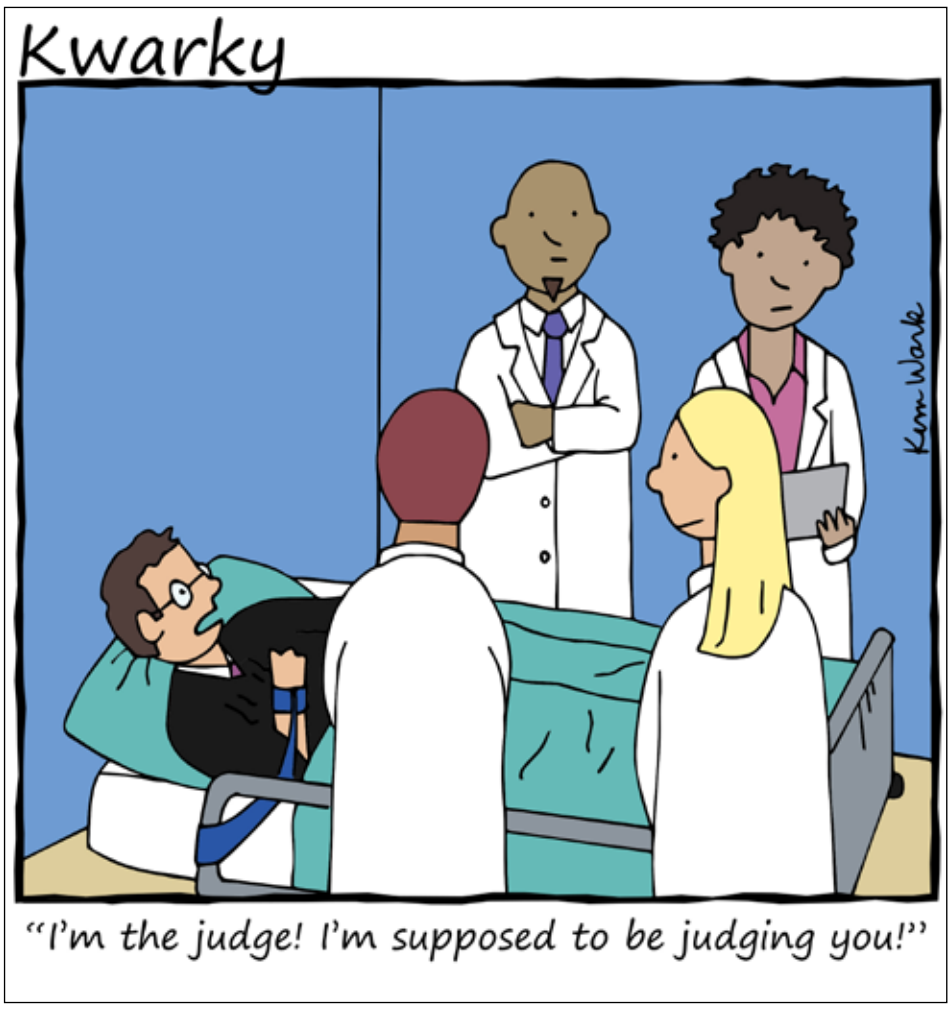
Overall, the 2025 Minden Christmas Bird Count will be remembered as a quiet event, yielding relatively few birds. As we now find ourselves in the deep throes of winter, it will not be long before the cheerful songs of arriving spring migrants once again fill the landscape. A sincere thank you to all those who participated in the 2025 count.

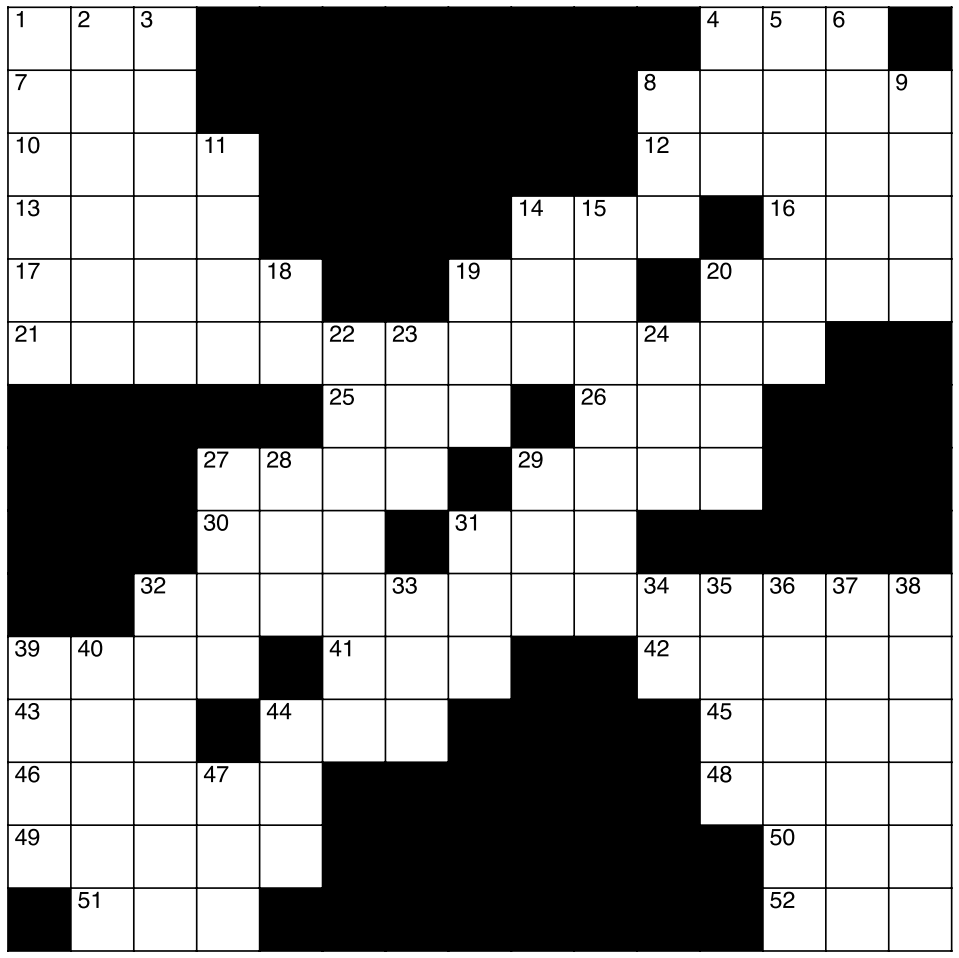
CROSSWORD ANSWERS



SUDOKU SOLUTION

4	8	1	5	7	3	2	6	9
3	7	2	9	8	6	4	1	5
5	6	9	4	2	1	7	8	3
2	1	4	7	9	8	3	5	6
6	3	7	1	4	5	8	9	2
8	9	5	6	3	2	1	7	4
9	2	8	3	6	7	5	4	1
1	4	3	8	5	9	6	2	7
7	5	6	2	1	4	9	3	8





CLUES ACROSS
1. Former CIA
4. Language
7. Constrictor snake
8. Demand
10. Rich man
12. Short-tailed marten
13. Zoroastrian concept of holy fire
14. Superconducting super collider
16. International group of countries within the Americas
17. Sacred state for Muslims
19. Shock therapy
20. Engrave
21. Localities
25. Paddle
26. Periodical
27. Dishonestly gained money
29. Gain possession of
30. Actor DiCaprio
31. High schoolers' test
32. Mr. October
39. Sign of healing
41. One's grandmother
42. Entrap
43. One who simultaneously buys and sells
44. __ Francisco
45. Web-based data provider of marine life
46. Type of snake
48. Dark mark or stain
49. Member of the Salii
50. Former measure of length
51. CNN's founder
52. Witness

CLUES DOWN
1. Acquire
2. Console
3. Hunting expedition
4. Pie _ __ mode
5. Simple shoes for peasants
6. Eurasian shrub
8. Reciprocal of a sine
9. Work together in harmony
11. Grenade
14. File extension
15. Minute pores in a plant
18. Medal of Honor
19. Make a mistake
20. Advance slowly, as if by inches
22. Sandwich meat
23. An awkward stupid person
24. Strong tree
27. Commoner
28. Electroencephalograph
29. __ Mahal
31. Congressman
32. Disorderly crowd
33. 007's creator Fleming
34. Atomic #55
35. Part of a door
36. Short-tail martens
37. Baltimore ballplayer
38. Cuddle
39. Gang in "The Outsiders"
40. Of Croatia
44. Body cavity
47. Get free of

Answers on page 17

Brought to you by

SUDOKU

	8	1				2		
			9		6			
5			4	2				
			7					
6	3	7			5			
			6		2	1		
						5		1
	4	3						7
		6		1				8

Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 17

Hal High Monthly

Hal High Monthly is written by the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School leadership class featuring monthy school news.

By: Izzy Horner-Xerri (Gr.12), Sophie Lee (Gr.11), Don Lowe (Gr.12), Jenn Upton (Gr.12), Marley Williams-Clarry (Gr.12)

December might have left us freezing but it didn't fail to be packed full of a wide range of activities at Hal High.

From hockey to wrestling, our school delivered many wins this past month. Our school play, *The Puffs; Or, Seven Eventful Years at a Certain School for Magic and Magic,* written by Matt Cox, showcased Hal High students with magical wands and friendship at a certain school of Magic and Magic and even while busy prepping for the holidays, the students and staff had a blast of fun during an array of exhilarating spirit days and exciting education that we can't wait to continue in January.

The HHSS Red Hawk Athletes have never been busier, with strong performances across several sports. The boys hockey team earned their first win of the season with a 3-1 home victory against Campbellford, while also showing fierce determination in the tough play against St, Peter.

The senior boys basketball team stayed undefeated, improving the HHSS season record to 9-0 with the impressive wins over IE Weldon, Kenner, and Campbellford.

The wrestling team had an excellent showing at a tournament in Trenton, with eight athletes placing in the top four of their weight classes while the Nordic ski team hosted the season's first meet at Glebe Park and delivered multiple podium finishes across novice, junior, and senior divisions.

HHSS's Drama Club immersed us in a certain school of magic, with their performance of *Puffs*. The cast brought us to a different world full of heartwarming friendships, evil teachers, giant snakes, his-name-that-we-try-not-to-say and a group of loyal Puffs. We followed the Puffs and their seven years at a certain school of magic through the good and the bad. HHSS's Drama Club performed three outstanding shows, each one engaging and full of wonder. We are so proud of our Redhawks and we can't wait to see where their acting takes us next.

HHSS took a blast to the past with decades week! On Tuesday, Dec. 2 we went back to the 50s and 60s with poodle skirts and leather jackets. Next on Wednesday we grooved down to the 70s wearing florals and bell bottom jeans. On Thursday we boogied to the 80s wearing an array of neons and puffy hair. Lastly, we slid into the 90s and 2000s strutting layered tops, low rise pants and jelly bracelets.

On Dec. 11 we got magical with Harry Potter house colours day! The bravest Gryffindors wore red, the smartest Ravenclaws wore blue, the ambitious Slytherins wore green and the caring Hufflepuffs wore yellow!

Dec. 17 we decked the halls of Hal High showcasing our holiday spirit in reds, greens, blues and whites . To kick off the Winter break our Redhawks were busy with many options to show off their holiday spirit and get in the celebrating mood!

December has had a wide array of activities ensuring all of our Redhawks have opportunities to shine. As we go off into the winter break we look forward to welcoming back Hal High in the new year as we gear up for exams and the end of the first semester.

A performance of *Puffs* wowed audiences as a part of the Hal High Drama Club's December performance. /FILE

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Guest Speakers include:
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- Angelica Ingram, Manager of Tourism
- Neil Vanderstoop, Haliburton County Snowmobile Association

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If you would like to learn more about this event or are considering become a member of the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce visit us at: **haliburtonchamber.com**

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COMING EVENTS

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is holding their AGM on
Saturday, January 24, 2026
in Room 1,
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Refreshments at 12:30 p.m.
Meeting at 1 p.m.

New directors welcome

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IN MEMORIAM

Don Hall
From Minden

In loving memory of a wonderful Husband, Father, Gramps and Best Friend who left us January 19, 2011

This day is remembered and quietly kept,
No words are needed,
we shall never forget,
For those we love don't go away,
They walk beside us every day.
Unseen and unheard, but always near,
So loved, so missed, and so very dear.

Sadly missed and loved forever!

Eleanor, Stewart, Glenn and Julie
Chris, Andrew, Ryan, Caitlin and Owen
Family and Friends

In Memory of
my awesome mom
Mary McNeil
Who passed away
Jan 16th, 2025
I will always love and
miss you.
You will always be in
my heart.

Mom, you are my hero.

Roy McNeil

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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory of

Dora Catherine Foster (nee Longfield)

March 15, 1940 – January 9, 2026

Passed away peacefully at Haliburton Hospital with her children by her side.

Predeceased by her loving husband Albert (Buck) 2018. She leaves behind her four children, Gary (Lisa), Margo (Kim), Brett and Kay. She also leaves behind her six grandchildren, ten great grandchildren and one great grandchild. She will also be missed by her sisters Frankie, Susan, Barbara, Jean and Kelly. She will also be missed by many nieces and nephews.

As per Dora's wishes, there will be no service.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Red Wolves Special Olympics (by cheque only) would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

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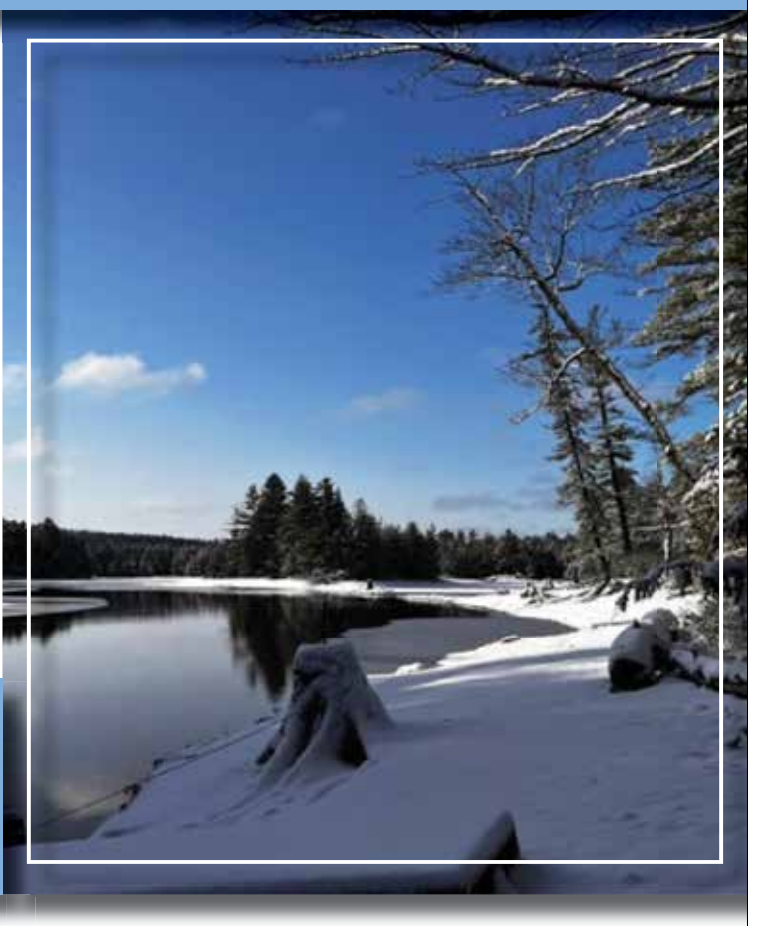

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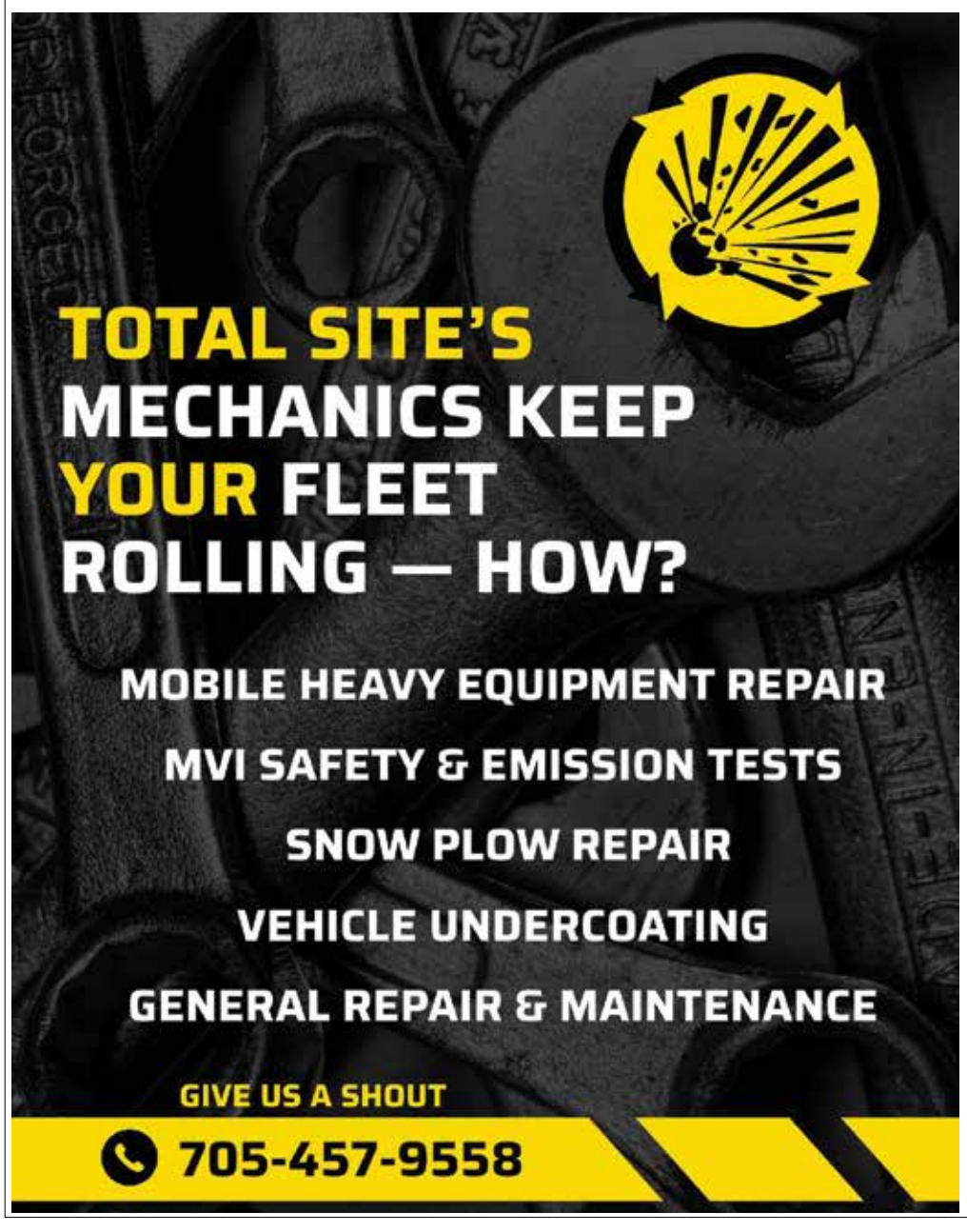

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Crash hurts couple

Community reaches out to help young Minden parents

by PETER DOWNS
Staff Reporter

The community is reaching out to help a young Minden couple who were badly hurt in a head-on car crash last week.

Darren and Tracy Cole, the parents of two girls, are receiving treatment for many serious injuries in separate Toronto hospitals after an accident Tuesday evening outside Minden.

Cathy and Vince Lancia, close family friends of the Coles, have set up a trust fund for the couple at the CIBC banks in Haliburton and Minden.

Doctors say Darren, 27, who sustained the most serious injuries, won't be able to stand up, let alone work, for about a year. Tracy, 25, is being moved to a rehabilitation centre next week for her leg injury, but also won't be able to work for quite a while.

Fortunately for the Coles, their daughters, Brandy, 8, and Bailey, 4, were not with them in their truck when the crash happened.

Aside from their physical injuries, the accident will also take a heavy toll on the couple's finances, said Cathy Lancia.

Because Darren was self employed through a carpentry company he recently started, he won't be able to qualify for unemployment benefits.

Tracy, who previously worked at Wee Care, has been participating in a retraining program where she was practising to be a hairdresser.

See HUSBAND page 2

PRICE: 84 cents plus GST = 90 cents

Winter's back and so's the fun!

We got a blanket of snow on the weekend that improved cross-country and snowmobile trail conditions after freezing rain and mild weather earlier in the week. Among the skiers enjoying the great outdoors at Moose Woods Trail Centre, near Haliburton, were the Eagle Lake family of Lorelyn Morgan, Maradyn Wood, Barrie Wood and Cavell Wood.

'Miles and miles of destruction'

Local Hydro crews help clean up after ice storm in Eastern Ontario

by MARTHA PERKINS
Editor

Even the tornadoes which have ripped through the Haliburton Highlands could not prepare local hydro crews for the devastation which greeted them last week in Eastern Ontario.

When a tornado hits the Highlands, the swath of downed poles and trees is restricted to a relatively small area, but after last week's ice storm left a two-inch coating of ice on buildings, poles, and trees "it's just miles and miles and miles of destruction," says Jim Burk, a forestry technician with the Minden Ontario Hydro base who's talked to some of the 19 men from the area who've gone to the Kingston area to help.

"It's inconceivable. It's incredible to try to even imagine it... I've heard they just get one thing fixed and it falls back down again. One lineman climbed a pole and 12 span fell down because of his weight, so they had an order not to climb any more. It's very dangerous because stuff is falling down all around them."

Just getting to the downed poles is dangerous. It took the crews and trucks almost six hours to get to Arnprior, a trip that usually takes four. It was hard to keep the trucks on the ice-covered roads.

"(Forestry technician Rusty Cochrane) said that to get to where they were going they had to detour for miles" because roads were blocked with debris, Burk says.

He also heard that not one house has a television antenna

See HYDRO page 4

Poor conditions postpone Sled Dog Derby

After carefully scrutinizing the trail, the Minden Sled Dog Derby committee has decided to postpone this year's race to the snow dates, January 31 and February 1.

The inspection tour on Monday morning revealed that the heavy rains of last week had created open water on may areas of the trail that would make trail construction impossible, even with the past weekend's snow. The popular races, which attract some of the continent's best mushers, were supposed to be this weekend.

"This decision is not taken lightly," Race Governor Val Lougheed says. "Our first concern is for the safety of the dogs. We wouldn't put our own dogs at risk and we won't ask others to do it either."

Both Val and Steve Lougheed and their two sons, Jesse and Caleb, are mushers.

She also noted that the event has become the leading sprint class in the world, a reputation that she did not wish to put in jeopardy by having an unsafe or inadequate trail.

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